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**Subject:** Microsoft Trial - Comment

Microsoft has had a profound effect on our businesses and our lives. There are few people who don't use Microsoft products, and for the most part those products are innovative and useful. The company is to be commended for the good it has done.

One of the problems with the industry is that there are extremely severe barriers to entry in the largest segment of the computer industry, PC's. Microsoft has taken effective steps toward keeping consumers faced with only one choice for PC operating system, Windows. One choice-robbing step Microsoft has taken is that PC's are shipped with Windows pre-installed. The pre-installation of Windows, while a convenience to the purchaser, has the effect of eliminating choice when a consumer purchases a computer. Pre-installation has also given Microsoft enormous power over the computer manufacturers to the effect that the manufacturers do almost anything Microsoft wants because if even a well known manufacturer, like IBM or Gateway were to ship machines without Windows they would be at a competitive disadvantage with consumers and distributors. In fact, in 1998 I was attempting to install a competitor to windows (OS/2) on a Gateway computer and the technicians at Gateway weren't ! even allowed to discuss it with me for fear of losing favor with Microsoft!

Some of the manufacturers now ship server type computers with Linux when requested, but that doesn't remove the barrier to entry that pre-installation has created.

I'd like to see Microsoft required to terminate agreements that result in Windows Operating System pre-installed on computers and not allowed to enter into new pre-installation agreements. It seems to me that if we had to choose the operating system when we buy the machine the barrier that exists from pre-installation would go away. I suspect that most people would still choose Windows, but there would be knowledge of what it costs and alternative operating systems would then have a chance. Since it is now pre-installed and the price of the computer includes the price for Windows, the consumer has no way of knowing how much is being paid for Windows and how much for the computer.

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